

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Ballard Family Dairy & Cheese

Idaho TechHelp

#### Ballard Family Dairy & Cheese Finds its Whey with Cheese and Curds

##### Client Profile:

Ballard Family Dairy & Cheese is a family run operation providing milk to a large commercial cheese operation and produces its own line of artisan cheeses for wholesale and retail markets nationwide. In business since 1993, the farm is located in Gooding, Idaho and employs 4 people.

##### Situation:

After relocating to Idaho, the Ballards built a barn and purchased 25 Jersey dairy cows. They began selling milk to a large commercial cheese producer and expanded the operation in hopes of turning a profit. Their bottom line began to suffer as payments on land, cows and equipment skyrocketed and the price of milk tanked to a 20-year loss. The Ballards decided to diversify and add value to their raw material by producing a line of artisan cheeses. Part of the Ballard's solution was to consult with food specialist, Jeff Kronenberg, of TechHelp, a NIST MEP network affiliate, and the University of Idaho, who put his knowledge as well that of his network of food professionals at the disposal of the Ballards.

##### Solution:

TechHelp's food specialist, Jeff Kronenberg, helped the Ballards secure funding from the United Dairymen of Idaho that helped pay for services which included:

- Assistance with developing a line of artisan cheese products
- Ongoing assistance from TechHelp and cheese experts on product and process creation and improvement
- TechHelp assistance in building and managing an ecommerce Web site
- Guidance in developing wholesale and retail markets such as grocery stores, restaurants and farmers markets
- Ongoing assistance to help explore and develop new products and markets

Today, Ballard artisan cheese products include six varieties of cheese curds, several varieties of cheddar cheese and new additions including Danish Pearl and Haloumi. The Ballard's Pepper Cheddar Cheese took first place at the prestigious American Cheese Society 2006 Annual Conference and their Idaho Garlic Herb took second place in the Flavored Cheese competition. The company now serves a niche that offers great margins and is outside the traditional commodity cheese market.

##### Results:

- \* Increased sales by \$38,000.
- \* Retained sales of \$18,000.
- \* Process improvements generated \$10,000 in cost savings.
- \* Invested \$14,000 in plant and equipment.
- \* Anticipate increased production of 20,000 pounds of cheese per month.

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- \* New ecommerce website opened new markets.
- \* Anticipate creating new facility for tours, retail sales, cheese making classes, education and research.
- \* Achieved a more competitive and profitable position.

#### **Testimonial:**

"As a food producer in rural Idaho, we feel very fortunate that we can tap in to the knowledge and expertise available through TechHelp and its network of service providers. Everyone has been unbelievably helpful and really wants to see small farmers like us succeed."

Stacie Ballard, Owner